University Chamber Orchestra

Gary Lewis, conductor

7:30 p.m., Thursday, Oct. 25, 2018
Grusin Music Hall
Imig Music Building

College of Music
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **BOULDER**

CU PRESENTS

Program

Serenade for Strings in C major, Op. 48 Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

I. Pezzo in forma di sonatina: Andante non troppo — Allegro moderato (1840-1893)
II. Valse: Moderato — Tempo di valse
III. Élégie: Larghetto elegiaco
IV. Finale (Tema russo): Andante — Allegro con spirito

Intermission

Symphony No. 6 in F major, Op. 68 ("Pastorale") Ludwig van Beethoven

I. Allegro ma non troppo - Awakening of cheerful feelings in the country (1770-1827)
II. Andante molto moto - Scene by the brook
III. Allegro - Merry gathering of the country folk
IV. Allegro - Thunderstorm
V. Allegretto - Joyful and grateful feelings after the storm

Program Notes

Serenade for Strings in C major, Op. 48

In the autumn of 1880, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky worked simultaneously on a pair of orchestral compositions that could hardly be more different: his concert overture *1812* and his *Serenade for Strings*. The *1812 Overture* (as it is widely known) is one of numerous entries in Tchaikovsky's catalogue that were written to celebrate official occasions and might have been expected to fall from view immediately thereafter. More typical was the fate of his occasional piece *Music for a Tableau Vivant of Montenegrins Receiving the News of Russia's Declaration of War on Turkey*, also from 1880; that score has been lost, but it's hard to imagine one would hear it much even if it survived. Tchaikovsky penned *1812* for the inauguration of a cathedral and had no expectations for it beyond that. He informed his patron Nadezhda von Meck, "The overture will be very loud and noisy, but I wrote it without warmth or love, so it will probably not have any artistic merit." It went on to become hugely popular, of course, especially among people trying out new speaker systems.

In the same letter the composer said:

"The *Serenade*, by contrast, I wrote from an inner compulsion; it is deeply felt and for that reason, I venture to think, is not without real merit."

Some weeks later, after being treated to a surprise performance of the Serenade by students and professors at the Moscow Conservatory, he told her, "At the moment I consider it the best of all that I have written so far." Tchaikovsky was not alone in that opinion. Even Anton Rubinstein, his former principal teacher at the St. Petersburg Conservatory — and often a stern critic of his achievements — told the publisher Pyotr Ivanovich Jurgenson (so Jurgenson informed Tchaikovsky): "This is the best thing Tchaikovsky had written. You can congratulate yourself on the publication of this opus." Jurgenson published the score in January 1881, and within a few years it was showing up on concert programs in New York, Paris, Prague, Hamburg, London and Berlin.

At first Tchaikovsky was unsure about the forces he would use; perhaps it would be a full symphony orchestra, perhaps a string quartet. He ended up splitting the difference. By the time he finished the third movement, he had decided it would be a work for string orchestra, thereby maintaining the unified timbre of a quartet but expanding to the forces of an orchestral string section with double basses. In the autograph of the full score, Tchaikovsky noted: "The greater number of players in the string orchestra, the more this will be in accordance with the composer's wishes."

The *Serenade for Strings* is a gracious piece that stresses comfort rather than tension. Tchaikovsky wrote to von Meck that the first movement was crafted to imitate the manner of Mozart, although it's hard to figure out precisely how he viewed it that way. It seems more redolent of a late-baroque overture (at least in its formal layout), with a stately introduction repeated at the end to bookend a more spirited, dance-like center. What strikes the listener most forcefully, however, is not the work's architecture but rather the sheer sumptuousness of the sound, which Tchaikovsky achieves at the opening by having his players produce double-stops to achieve chords of up to nine voices (counting octave doublings), an effect that can also be accomplished by simply dividing the upper string sections.

The second movement is a graceful *Waltz*. It was encored at the first public performance, and Tchaikovsky would report ensuing encores of that movement in his letters to von Meck. The *Elegy* is built from ascending melodic phrases, keeping it from being a downer; when the violins sing its main theme, this movement seems no less balletic than a waltz. For his *Finale*, Tchaikovsky

draws on two Russian folk tunes. The second, which launches the lively *Allegro con spirito* section, takes on added significance at the very end. There Tchaikovsky recalls the stately music from the first movement, which now reveals that it shares its melodic contour with the skittering folk song.

Symphony No. 6 in F major, Op. 68

When Ludwig van Beethoven comes to mind, one may think first of monumental power and even violent ferocity, but the *Pastoral Symphony* offers a very different glimpse of the composer. Beethoven had reason to feel ferocious, having tasted more than his fair share of disarray and anguish. He had begun losing his hearing by late 1802—a great adversity for anyone, but a catastrophe for a musician. In the six years since, his deafness had increased dramatically. What's more, in March 1808 a raging infection threatened the loss of a finger, which would have spelled further disaster for a composer who was greatly attached to the keyboard. He was surrounded by a nervous political climate: Vienna had been occupied by Napoleon's troops since November 1805, and the civic restlessness would erupt into violence within months of the *Pastoral Symphony*'s premiere. Whatever confusion these circumstances engendered in Beethoven's personal life could only have been exacerbated by his habit of constantly moving from one lodging to another. In the course of 1808 alone—the year of the Sixth Symphony—he hung his hat at no fewer than four addresses. On the other hand, this was not Beethoven's whole life. He spent his summers mostly in rural areas surrounding Vienna, which is how he found himself installed in the village of Heiligenstadt during the summer of 1808, while working on the Sixth Symphony.

Beethoven voiced the opinion that listeners were generally restricted in their experience of a work if they expected in advance to hear some image depicted. His sketches for the *Pastoral Symphony* are littered with jottings that reinforce such ideas: "The hearers should be allowed to discover the situations," "All painting in instrumental music is lost if it is pushed too far," and so on. Nonetheless, tone-painting and "situations to discover" exist bountifully in this symphony, and Beethoven clearly condoned the use of the title *Pastoral*. Inscribed at the head of a violin part used in the first performance (and only parts were available at that time, since the orchestral score was not published until 1826) are the words "Sinfonia Pastorella / Pastoral-Sinfonie / oder / Erinnerung an das Landleben / Mehr Ausdruck der Empfindung als Mahlerei" ("Sinfonia Pastorella / Pastoral Symphony / or / Recollection of Country Life / More an Expression of Feeling than Painting"). Each of the symphony's five movements also carries an individual description: "Awakening of Cheerful Feelings upon Arrival in the Country," "Scene by the Brook," "Merry Gathering of Country Folk," "Thunderstorm" and "Shepherd's Song; Happy and Thankful Feelings after the Storm." Numerous compositions have been cited as prefiguring the programmatic bent of Beethoven's *Pastoral*, including Haydn's early Symphonies No. 6 (*Le Matin*), No. 7 (*Le Midi*) and No. 8 (*Le Soir*); a piano fantasia by Franz Jakob Freystädtler called *A Spring Morning, Noon, and Night* and a five- movement symphony by Justin Heinrich Knecht titled *Le Portrait musical de la nature*. Such pieces were characteristic of the age, an epoch nursed by the back-to-nature philosophy of Rousseau and Herder. In Beethoven's Sixth, nature found its supreme musical mirror.

—Program notes courtesy of the New York Philharmonic

Personnel

Violin
Jackson Bailey
Seth Bixler
Maggie Brady
Ben Ehrmantraut
Jonathan Galle
Grace Harper
Megan Healy
Robbie Herbst
Lindey Hoak
Mackenzie Hoffman
Marisa Ishikawa
Ryan Jacobsen
Sun Mi Jin
Paul Kim
Jenna Kramer
Kristen Olsen
Ava Pacheco
Renée Patten +
Elizabeth Potter
Natalie Smith
Caitlin Stokes
Sophia Thaut
Brandon Wu
Tom Yaron +

Viola
Jonathan Asbury
Javier Chacon
Ariel Chien
Jaryn Danz
Abigail Dreher
Autumn Greenlee
Jordan Holloway
Jessica Kus
Elizabeth Macintosh
Breana McCullough
Stephanie Mientka
Erin Napier
Mario Rivera *
Conrad Sclar
Sophia Wonneberger

Cello
Ethan Blake
Hannah Brown
Edward Cho
Dakota Cotugno
Kamila Dotta
Eric Haugen *
Nicholas Johnson
Jessica Lee
Elisabeth Murphy
Whitman Poling
Jacob Saunders
Haley Slaugh
Emily Taylor

Double Bass
Alex Bozik
Timothy Chen *
Portia Pray
Nick Ten Wolde
Jason Thompson *

Flute
Joshua Hall
Mara Riley

Oboe
Hannah Harm
Kristin Weber

Clarinet
Colby Bond
Rachel Wood

Bassoon
Gyungsun Im
Kristina Nelson

Horn
Josh East
Kieran Scruggs
Benjamin Shafer

Trumpet
Samuel Milam
Max McNutt

Trombone
Ben Garcia
Aaron Zalkind

Timpani
John Sevy

\+ Concertmaster
* Principal

music+performance

Upcoming Performances

$ Ticketed events L Live broadcast at cupresents.org

Friday, Nov. 2
Artist Series
Venice Baroque Orchestra $
7:30 p.m., Macky Auditorium

Sunday, Nov. 4
CU Choirs L
7:30 p.m., Grusin Music Hall

Sunday, Nov. 11
Ekstrand Competition Finals L
2 p.m., Grusin Music Hall

Monday, Nov. 12
Vocal Jazz and Madrigal Singers L
7:30 p.m., Macky Auditorium

Wednesday, Nov. 14
Symphonic Band L
7:30 p.m., Macky Auditorium

Thursday, Nov. 15
Wind Symphony L
7:30 p.m., Macky Auditorium

Friday, Nov. 16
Artist Series
Sarah Chang, violin $
7:30 p.m., Macky Auditorium

Thursday, Nov. 29
Symphony Orchestra L
7:30 p.m., Macky Auditorium

Friday, Nov. 30
Early Music Ensemble L
7:30 p.m., Grusin Music Hall

Dec. 7-9
Holiday Festival $
Macky Auditorium

Monday, Dec. 17
Canadian Brass $
7:30 p.m., Macky Auditorium

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